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## **MATSUI LEADS GROUP OF PRO-TRADE DEMOCRATS IN OPPOSITION TO THOMAS FAST TRACK BILL**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today U.S. Representative Robert Matsui (D-Sacramento) led a group of moderate Democratic Members of Congress expressing their opposition to H.R. 3005, the Thomas Fast Track/Trade Promotion Authority bill, which is scheduled to come to a vote on Thursday. The members, many of whom were previously undecided or undeclared on the issue, came together to announce and explain their opposition to the Thomas bill, despite each member's consistent support for the principles of free trade.

"This vote is not about free trade. It's about the delegation of authority over domestic legislation from Congress to the Executive Branch," explained Matsui. "Trade negotiations are no longer primarily about tariff and quota reductions. Today, U.S. domestic laws on issues such as environmental regulations, antitrust laws, and food safety are on the table as 'non-tariff barriers to trade.' Fast track can work, but only if Congress is given adequate safeguards so that it can act as a substantive partner in negotiations, not as a mere spectator as U.S. laws are bargained away by international trade negotiators."

Matsui convened the group on the eve of a contentious vote on fast track trade negotiating authority. After weeks of postponements, the Republican House Leadership declared that they will bring the Thomas bill to a vote on Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup>. Moderate Democrats who support free trade agreements – including such past agreements as NAFTA, previous extensions of fast track authority, permanent normal trade relations with China, Chinese accession to the WTO, and others – are a key bellwether of the likelihood of passage.

Representatives Charles Rangel (D-NY), Sander Levin (D-MI), and Matsui have introduced an alternative fast track bill, H.R. 3019, that would provide the executive branch with the authority necessary to conduct trade negotiations, while leaving Congress with an appropriate degree of its constitutionally mandated authority over foreign commerce and domestic policy. The Rangel-Levin-Matsui bill also includes important provisions to enhance protections for labor and the environment in trade agreements.

"Because contemporary trade negotiations will encroach upon our legislative prerogative, Congress must have an integral role in developing the negotiating positions that the Executive Branch takes when reaching trade agreements," Matsui said. "The members who joined me here today did not do so because they are anti-trade, or because of partisan politics. We're pro-trade, but we're not prepared to put our responsibility to our constituents to make, preserve, and defend U.S. law on a fast track to the executive branch. That's why the Thomas bill is headed for defeat if it comes to the floor."

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